

Extra Chapter - Nanahoshi Grilled Dragon

Part 1

East Port.

The largest port city, not just of Kingdom of Dragon King, but of the whole world.

They may share the same language, but the mood and store fronts here are quite different than those at Holy Kingdom of Milis.

But being my fourth port call in recent days, the novelty of it all had long wore off, so as soon as we disembarked I was ready to find a hotel.

It was then Eris suddenly said.

"Something smells good!"

A good smell? Like the scent of Eris nape after a long, hard training session?

With that thought I sniffled my nose, indeed the air carried a delicious fragrance.

The sun had already risen high, yet our tummies was left empty.

"I'm hungry."

"Me too..."

Eris nodded.

Her sights set at the source of the fragrance. It appeared to be a restaurant.

Awfully rundown for an restaurant.

Its walls battered with holes littered about. Its store sign so worn and old, the words on it had long faded from view.

Even the door won't close properly, ready to fell. More of a haunted house than restaurant.

But the fragrance that lingers no doubt smelled delicious.

That fragrance carried over by the wind whetted our appetites. It smelled of nostalgia, causing my tummy to rumble.

"We're going in?"

Ruijerd asked me.

Without realizing it, my feet were already carrying me towards the restaurant.

"...Eh, is that a problem?"

"You once said, do judge a restaurant by its appearance."

I may have said that before.

But that was in the Magic Continent.

In Magic Continent, a restaurant's kemptness generally matched with the quality of food served within.

Of course, there're probably ugly restaurants with amazing food somewhere... but I never did gave them a shot.

But for some reason, my interests are piqued this time.

"Can't hurt, once a while."

"Well, as you said..."

With the two of them in tow, we went in.

The door creaked loudly as we opened it. Inside, it's as dirty as out.

No, dirty was the wrong word for it. It's obvious that cleanliness had been kept.

Simply rather shabby looking.

Chairs missing legs, tables with cracks in them, the floors were full of potholes.

Of course, not a customer in sight.

"Owner!"

Eris yelled merrily.

Completely remiss about the lack of customers at lunch time.

Even though I did feel some trepidation, my anticipation more than compensated.

"Welcome..."

As soon as we sat down, a skull looking man came by to drop off the menu.

Even so, he looked less than enthused.

You don't have to fake enthusiasm, but would it hurt to flash a smile at your customers?

"Rudeus, maybe it's best to eat elsewhere?"

It's rare for Ruijerd to raise an objection.

But let's not rush to judge off appearances.

"Well, the taste might surprise you."

The skull man interjected with a bitter smile while opening the menu.

The menu had only two options... Nanahoshi Grilled Dragon, and Boiled Alba Fish.

Restaurants in Milis usually had at least ten items to choose from.

Even shabby ones had more options than this.

Maybe with less options to sell, a restaurant could sell for cheaper?

"What would you like to order?"

Meat or fish?

Alba Fish are fished off the Southern Sea.

A commonly eaten fish in this area according to Ruijerd. Boiled dish, so a crock pot soup probably. A cooking method common in Kingdom of Dragon King.

Nanahoshi Grilled Dragon on the other hand?

I never heard of that before.

Kingdom of Dragon King has a Dragon King Mountain Range nearby. As the name suggests, the king of dragons resides there.

Supposedly, a dragon capable of controlling gravity itself, a meat from that?

Or something similar?

And Nanahoshi Grilled Dragon?

First time I heard of this cooking style, although I'm no expert of the various cuisines in this world.

Maybe a Kingdom of Dragon King specialty?

It pique my curiosity.

"Meat."

"Meat too."

"Then three orders of meat."

After taking order from these three carnivores, he skull man disappeared into the kitchen without saying a word.

Of course, no tea was served.

In this world, this level of service is typical.

As such, I used earth magic to make cups and served some water myself.

Self service.

For a weary body, a little water was just what the doctor ordered.

"Rudeus, refill!"

Eris chugged the water down in one gulp and began to chew through the cup.

Grumbling, I poured her another cup.

She could do her own chants if we're outside, but I won't make her indoors.

Since she couldn't quite control her water volume.

"..."

Ruijerd quietly sipped his, per usual.

This man wolves down food quickly, but would never chugs his drink.

"Doesn't seem like this city has any important information for us."

"Yeah, there're some swords I'd like to check out, but maybe ones in the next city over would be even better?"

Perhaps a sign of its prosperity, but Kingdom of Dragon King features many sword shops.

The walk over were filled with sword stalls.

At first Eris' eyes glimmered with excitement, but they quickly faded in disappointment with realization that they're dull blades made to cheat rookies.

After practicing swordsmanship for so long, even Eris gained an eye for sword quality.

It's only natural.

"Excuse me!"

Just as we opened on this topic, the door was slammed open.

With his shoes still on, an pestering scum came barging in.

No, there's no custom of removing shoes here, even I wore mine.

Hearing that voice, the skull man came back out.

"Chagall..."

"Randolph, please give me an answer today!"

"No matter how many times you come, sorry, but my answer would never change."

"You idiot! You really plan to rot in this dump of a shop?"

"My ancestor started this shop.. no matter what, until I die..."

Overhearing, I understood the circumstances surrounding this restaurant.

The jist of it was business had been tough, so this store had to borrow money to stay afloat.

And that pestering scum a land developer of sorts.

"But excuse me... I have customers today."

"Customers! Wow, you have customers, how unusual!"

"I'm going to keep going, even with just one."

"Idiot."

After ridiculing him, the scum sat himself down by a nearby table.

The skull man took a glance before returning to the kitchen.

Must be rough.

Alright, I decided, if the food is good, I'll help spread the word.

"That guy is looking over."

"...."

"Stop it, Rudeus, I can't see!"

Eris was about to show displeasure, so I covered her eyes.

This can't be solved with fists, but with food.

Hey, stop, Eris, don't grab my palm, it's gonna break, it's breaking!

"Sorry for the wait."

While tussling with Eris, our orders arrived.

Seeing the dishes, my eyes bugged out.

"This is...!"

Nanahoshi Grilled Dragon.

An order of three parts.

First, the soup. A clear but savory vegetable soup.

Hard to mess that up, what's important is the other two dishes.

First, to the left, a main dish I had yet to see before in this world.

The emperor's white gold - rice.

No, the rice is slightly off white. Not pure white rice, but had some other grains

mixed in. Mixed grain rice! It's been so long, can my eyes be deceiving me?

How nostalgic, this smell.

This is the scent of steamed rice. Nostalgia drew my full attention at it.

But what about the other side?

Cooked to a perfect yellow and gold, no matter what angle I looked at, it looks like...

Fried Chicken.

Along with a miso soup that's not really miso, and a steamed rice that's not really steamed rice.

This is a "Fried Chicken Combo"!

"Wow!"

"What is it?"

Ruijerd inquired the stirring me, while Eris stared at me confoundingly.

"No... It's nothing."

Fried chicken exists in this world.... A blessing from the heavens?

That Hitogami finally granted me what I had been yearning for.

Taste it well, taste it now, just taste it.

I clapped my hands together and offered the heaven and earth a prayer.

"I'm digging in."

No chopsticks, so with a spoon I shoveled a mouthful in.

"Woooooo...."

Tears dripped from my eyes.

In my past life, my love of rice was so that I couldn't live without it.

Especially once past thirty, I even dared to declare that all I need to live was rice, ingesting two liters a day.

This rice, compared to the rice back then, wasn't particularly delicious.

Based on the rice scale in Japan, it probably won't even make Rank C.

But this is rice, real, eatable rice!

There's no good or bad when it comes to rice, today, I finally realized that.

"R-Rudeus... what happened?"

"No, it's nothing."

Like Imperial Japanese troops returning from the Siberian Campaign, I swallowed each tear soaked bite.

Carefully chewing every bite, savoring rices' every flavor.

My only regret was it wasn't enough, perhaps I should try the side dish to compensate.

I lifted my grubby hand at the fried chicken.

Stabbed it with a fork and shoved it in my mouth hole.

"Ugh!"

All the feelings that rice inspired in me instantly dissipated.

Conclusion: not fried chicken, it's worse than nothing.

The skin reeked of oil, the meat tasted foul and gamy.

Just a little nibble overwhelmed my nostrils with smell of tainted meat and oil.

I spat it all out.

"..."

Rage boiled over.

This.

I was suppose to have rice.... with this?

No, I would eat it as long as its rice, but even just salt would be better as condiment.

Rice and salt, 10 points.

This is not my battlefield.

But an anger boiled in my heart. To rice, this fried chicken was heresy.

"Owner!"

Part 2

I start lecturing the apprehensive owner.

First things first, the soup passes.

A broth-like vegetable soup with a slight hint of salt, a surprising match with the atypical mix grained rice.

I score the soup and rice 10 points, their affinity also 10 points.

A soup that demonstrated the chef's abilities.

The rice was also steamed well.

Water and heat were both adequate.

Proof of a professional at work, each grain of rice brought tears to ones eyes.

On a tangent, serving water should be a minimum.

For this, I'm willing to provide as much Ruijerd-brand water as he would like as a gift.

Better than any well water, a specialty water by yours truly.

After those accolades, I start slamming the fried chicken, aka "Nanahoshi Grilled Dragon".

An utter disgrace.

Unfit for human consumption, and you expect people to pay? I, Rudeus of Dead End, won't allow for it! Don't underestimate me!

The seething anger I displayed was akin to the head honcho of a particular culinary show.

Even I don't know why I got so angry.

Maybe because I was starving. Eventually, Eris and Ruijerd had to stop and drag me from the shop.

Maybe I over did it.

Even though I did say how much I love his rice.

I should really watch my actions as a guest.

This world had no gourmet ingredients to speak of.

It could very well be the oil used for fried chicken was already very expensive.

Maybe it was a mere coincidence, that this world had a culture of eating rice and knowledge of frying chicken.

So why was I so seething with anger?

When I left the store, I could see the store owner shriveled into himself, maybe even a tear in his eyes.

I was immature.

I must reflect on that...

Part 3

--- Owner's point of view ----

Business was bad.

Years without any customer. Even those that did come would not return, and debt just accumulates.

Yet, my one customer for the day flipped out on me.

Oil had to be hotter, it's worthless if the meat retained moisture. The meat tasted foul.

And finally said, "more than anything, it was the wrong meat."

Dragon meat had been this store's tradition for hundreds of years.

To criticized over something so fundamental, what's more to be done?

"No, I was a little shocked..."

That mousy fellow was chatting me up again.

Chagall Gargantis.

This man had pestered me for years.

"But that just now convinced you right? Even a kid like that could tear apart your culinary skills."

That Chagall always wore a disgusting smile on his face.

If I may be honest, he does has a good looking face and a good head over his shoulders.

Where he's recruiting me for, he has several dozen working under him.

Yet he always wore this ugly grin with questionable motives.

No makeover planned.

"Well... but...."

"I can appreciate you're sentimental, about continuing your family legacy, but you have no business skills, no strength to protect this store."

Those straightforward words pierced my heart.

But he's right, whether in business or cooking I had skills in neither.

Even a kid like that found it disgusting, below par.

"But you have other talents. Every man has stuff they're good at and stuff they're not good at."

"You're right..."

I had no choice but agree.

I know now, what I had to do.

"I get it, time to close shop."

This shop's two hundred fifty years legacy, finally met its ruins in my hands.

This lifetime's shame will be my burden.

I feel.

That day.

Generalissimo Chagall Gargantis of Kingdom of Dragon King successfully recruited a particular individual.

Fourth among the Seven Great Powers, "Death God" Randolph Marianne.

After years of refusing his offer, why did he accept it so suddenly?

Only a few ever knew.

Translator's Notes and References